

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOAL 0242

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP, KS, US
SUBJECT: PROPOSED VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER TO WASHINGTON

1. YESTERDAY (JANUARY (JANUARY 11) FOREIGN MINISTER PARK TONG-JIN CALLED ME IN PRIVATELY TO SOUND OUT POTESIBILITY OF VISIT BY PRIME MINISTER CHOE KYU-HA TO WASHINGTON EARLY THIS YEAR. PRIMIN ALSO SPOKE TO ME DURING EVENING AT DINNER HOSTED BY HIM FOR SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS.

2. BOTH PRIMIN AND FONMIN EMPHASIZED THAT VISIT INTENDED AS LOW KEY, LOW VISIBILITY EFFORT DESIGNED TO CONTACT SENIOR U.S. OFFICIALS FOR DISCUSSION OF MUTUAL PROBLEMS. THEY THOUGHT EXCHANGE COULD BE USEFUL GIVEN DIFFICULTIES OF THE PAST YEAR, CONTINUING PROBLEMS AHEAD, AND IMPLICITY GIVEN PROBABILITY SUMMIT MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENTS WOULD NOT BE ARRANGED THIS YEAR.

3. FONMIN SAID THAT PROPOSED VISIT HAD BLESSING OF PRESIDENT PARK. IT WAS HOPED, IF VISIT COULD BE ARRANGED, THAT IT WOULD INCLUDE BRIEF COURTESY CALL ON PRESIDENT CARTER SUCH AS WAS ARRANGED FOR FONMIN LAST YEAR, AE WELL AS CALLS ON SECRETARY VANCE AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS. FONMIN SAID THAT PREFERRED TIME FRAME WOULD BE LATE FEBRUARY OR EARLY MARCH, BUT PRIMIN INDICATED GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON TIMING. PRIMIN'S
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TRIP WOULD ALSO INCLUDE STOPS AT SEVERAL EUROPEAN CAPITALS.

4. RECOMMENDATION: WHILE PRIME MINISTER IS NOT VERY SIGNIFICANT IN KOREAN POWER STRUCTURE, HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON COULD SERVE SEVERAL PURPOSES. FIRST, IT COULD BE USEFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE SYMBOLICALLY AS RECOGNITION OF IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO KOREAN RELATIONSHIP AND AS PART OF CONTINUING EFFORT TO

REPAIR SOME OF THE DAMAGE TO THE RELATIONSHIP INCURRED
IN RECENT YEARS. AGREEMENT TO VISIT WOULD ALSO BE SEEN
AS SIGN OF U.S. RECIPROCATING FOR OBVIOUS EFFORTS ON PART OF
ROK END OF LAST YEAR TO IMPROVE STANDING IN U.S. FINALLY,
VISIT WILL GIVE US OPPORTUNITY EXPOSE PRIMIN AND FONMIN, WHO
WILL ACCOMPANY HIM, TO CONTINUING PROBLEMS FACED BY ROK IN
U.S. AND NEED FOR FURTHER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ON ITS PART.
SINCE I ALSO ASSUME THAT SUMMIT MEETING WILL BE DIFFICULT TO
ARRANGE THIS YEAR, I WOULD RECOMMEND AGREEING IN PRINCIPLE TO
PRIMIN VISIT AND THEN SEEKING TO WORK OUT MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE
TIME, PREFERABLY EARLIER THIS YEAR AS PROPOSED BY FONMIN.
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